

Pastor Geoffrey R. Boyle
Funeral Homily: John Zumalt
29 August 2014
Grace Lutheran Church, Wichita
Romans 1:16

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit

Shame is something we try to hide.
We might be ashamed of our weight, and so we put on looser clothing.
If we're ashamed of a receding hairline, we wear a hat.
Maybe we're ashamed to get something wrong, so we don't try new things.
Shame is something we cover and hide.

And whatever we're covering and hiding—whatever we're ashamed of—is a weakness.
No one hides the things they're good at, or covers their pride.

For example, John regularly had his photographs of flowers hung at Botanica for all to see.
He was proud of them, and so was his family—
 even if they were constantly surrounded by pictures!

And when we're proud of our kids, we tell others about them.
We boast in them—in a good way, just as John did with his.

And when the Chiefs did well—you couldn't stop John from boasting in them!
 But after a bad season, he'd rather talk about Jayhawk basketball, or WSU.

We boast in our strengths.
We're ashamed of our weakness.

That's the way of this world. It's who we are.

But when John joined this church 32 years ago he found that in the church and with Christ things are often flipped on their heads.

He found in this Church a place where Christ crucified is preached.
And by "Christ crucified" we mean Christ in His weakness, His humility, His shame.
We mean Christ who emptied Himself,
 who considered equality with God a thing not to be grasped,
 but made Himself nothing,
 taking the form of a slave, a body of weakness,
 who suffered a thief's death, hanging naked for all to see and mock. (Philippians 2:6-8)

Here John heard of this Christ, this Son of God, who suffered for the sin of the world,
 and who on the third day rose again from the dead *for him*.

He heard the forgiveness of *his* sins, life everlasting, salvation for all who believe in this Jesus.

Here John learned to boast not in Himself, but in Christ and Him crucified.

For that reason he chose as his Confirmation verse, this passage in St. Paul's letter to the Romans:

*"For I am not ashamed of the Gospel,
for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes,
to the Jew first and also to the Greek."* (Rom 1:16)

John wasn't ashamed of the Gospel.

He wasn't ashamed to confess that all of salvation, all of our certainty, lies in Christ alone.

He wasn't ashamed, even as an adult, to put his head under the waters of Holy Baptism.

He wasn't ashamed to confess his sin, his weakness, his own mortality.

He wasn't ashamed to be called a child of God, to be *born a second time*.

He wasn't ashamed to put aside his own works, his own ideas,

and his own attempts at getting right with God,

all for the sake of clinging to what Christ has done *for him*.

Nicodemus, in our Gospel reading, is clearly ashamed of such things:

"How can a man be born when he is old?

Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" (John 3:4)

Nicodemus is ashamed of a salvation that comes freely as a gift—just like being born.

He's ashamed that he can't show his work, or talk about all the good he's done and taught.

Nicodemus is ashamed that it can't be all about him.

But not John.

He recognized that it's not about him, but Christ for him.

He's not ashamed of the Gospel.

He's not ashamed that God has done literally everything for him and his salvation.

And this power of God comes in the Word: the preaching, the Sacraments—in the Church.

It's a word that does what it says and gives what it promises.

And in case you missed what's promised, Jesus says in our gospel today:

*"For God loved the world in this way: that He gave His only begotten Son,
that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.*

*For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world,
but in order that the world might be saved through Him."* (Jn 3:16-17)

That's the Gospel—the *good news*—that salvation is already won for you in Christ.

And it's all free; it's all God's work—not yours.

It wouldn't be *good news* if it depended on us.

It wouldn't be certain, or steady—

we'd always wonder if we made the right choice, or did enough, or believed enough.

But like John, we're not ashamed of the Gospel—

for it is the power of God for the salvation of all who believe.

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit